

Conservation News

Environmental News and Information from the City of Melbourne Utilities Department

Free seminar to offer Florida-friendly landscaping tips for homeowners

Proper landscape management can reduce water use and contaminant runoff, and enhance the aesthetics of a home or other property through careful planning, design and appropriate maintenance. To help homeowners in Melbourne and throughout Brevard County achieve the best results in an environmentally-sensitive way, a free landscaping seminar is being

held right before the spring growing season begins.

The focus of this year's third annual Florida Friendly Landscape Seminar will be good irrigation techniques for the homeowner. This annual event is put on by the Brevard Water Utilities Conservation Committee, comprised of the cities of Melbourne, Cocoa and Palm Bay, and Brevard County Water Resources, in conjunction with the St. Johns River Water Management and Midwest Research Institute – Florida Division.

of irrigation systems and methods to irrigate efficiently.

These seminars have continued to be very popular with Brevard County residents. They help residents achieve their gardening goals, and they help Melbourne's water utility, along with the other water utilities in Brevard County, meet water management district consumptive-use permit public education and outreach requirements, along with those for Florida NPDES stormwater permitting.

Imperial's Hotel is located in Viera at I-95 and Wickham Road. The seminar includes a free continental breakfast, rain gauges, hose nozzles and other items. Pre-registration is mandatory and space is limited.



Sally Scalera, one of the featured speakers.



Attendee at last year's seminar looks at a display while on a break.

This free landscape seminar will be held on Saturday, Feb. 15 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Imperial's Hotel and Conference Center in Viera. Registration begins at 8 a.m.

Sally Scalera, horticultural extension agent with the University of Florida Brevard County Extension Service and *Florida Today* columnist, will be one of the featured speakers.

While information will be provided on good plant selection and placement, advice will also be given on design and maintenance

To make reservations, call (321) 674-5761 or send an e-mail to jwilster@melbourneflorida.org and be sure to include your name and any names of others in your party who will be attending, your address, phone number and let us know if you attended last year's seminar.

Arbor Day Activities Planned

Melbourne's annual Arbor Day celebration will be held Friday, Jan. 10 at the Honor America war memorial, across Hickory Street from Wells Park. The program will begin at 10:30 a.m. and feature Kim Zarillo of the Florida Native Plant Society as guest speaker.

Two magnolias will be planted and 1,000 cherry laurel seedlings will be given to attendees. Cherry laurels are Florida native trees.

The public is invited to attend this event which is sponsored by the Melbourne Beautification and Environmental Advisory Committee.



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Holiday recycling tips & news

“Green” gift wrap ideas

Reduce, reuse and recycle. It’s a familiar slogan to many and the holiday season presents a time when there is plenty of opportunity to put these words into practice.

According to Deborah Meshelany, the City’s Recycling and Sanitation Management Division supervisor, each year thousands of tons of paper and bows are discarded, which make their way to the landfill.

She is encouraging people to use creative ways to cut back on holiday waste.

“Many holiday gift bag, bows and ribbons can be saved and reused,” Meshelany said.

Instead of wrapping gifts in the usual way, she says people could place gifts in bowls, cups, baskets, tote bags and other useful items. Or consider using

ties, scarves, old costume jewelry, shells, silk flowers, etc. to make creative gift decorations.

“This is fun, creative, and a great way to reduce, reuse and recycle,” Meshelany said.

Christmas trees to the curb



While you can’t necessarily reduce or reuse it, you sure can recycle your Christmas tree when the holidays are over.

On your regular yard trash collection day, place your old tree curbside. It does not need to be cut into four-foot lengths, as per the usual requirements for yard waste, and do not bag the tree. Remember to remove all the old tinsel and other decorations.

Your old tree will be taken to the landfill and turned into mulch, which is free to residents.

5th year Groundwater Guardian status earned



For the fifth year in a row, the City of Melbourne has earned the designation as a Groundwater Guardian.

Groundwater Guardian is a program of the Groundwater Foundation, a private, nonprofit educational organization that informs and motivates people to care about and for groundwater.

Melbourne’s designation is based on groundwater protection related programs the City’s team performed during the past year

For more information about the program, visit their web site at www.groundwater.org.

Repairing leaks adds up to big water savings



A running toilet or a dripping sink can waste vast quantities of water. The average leaky toilet can waste about 200 gallons of water per day, while dripping faucets can cause losses that range from several gallons to hundreds of gallons per day.

Toilet leaks are often silent, but sometimes they produce a running water sound or can be seen as a small trickle running from the rim to the water in the bowl.

A simple test can be used to detect if you have a toilet leak. Remove the lid from the tank and remove any colored cleansing agents. Flush the toilet to clear the water in the bowl. Next, add a few drops of food coloring or drop in a leak detection dye tablet. If the tank is leaking, color from the dye will appear in the bowl within 30 minutes. Just make sure not to flush during the testing period.

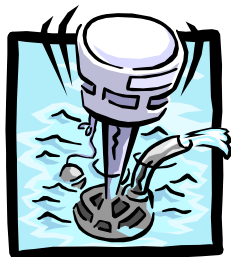
If you discover a leak, there are some simple steps to follow to make the repair:

- Jiggle the handle. If this makes the toilet stop running, the chain may just be out of alignment.

- If the toilet handle frequently sticks, which lets the water run, replace or adjust it.

- Check the rubber flapper at the bottom of the tank. If it is worn or corroded, it will not reseal tightly after flushing and needs to be replaced. Replacement kits are available at most hardware stores.

- Check the water level in the tank. The correct water level is about one-half inch below the tip of the overflow tube. To lower the water level, use a screwdriver to adjust the screw on the end of the ballcock float arm or bend the float arm down until the correct water level is achieved.



If these procedures don’t work, call your plumber or consider replacing it with a new water conserving toilet.

Besides toilets, faucets also need to be promptly repaired if they are leaking. Replace the washers by tightening or replacing the faucet stem. There are a variety of repair kits available at plumbing supply stores and home improvement/hardware stores. Most

kits contain detailed instructions. A plumber can also be hired to make necessary repairs.

Besides repairing leaks and replacing water-guzzling toilets, there are many other ways to save water in the bathroom.

Install low-flow faucet aerators on the sinks and change out showerheads to low-volume models. Following are other tips you can use to save water here:

- Try to limit your showers to five minutes.



- Fill bathtubs only halfway full when taking baths.

- Turn off the water when you brush

your teeth or shave.

- Dispose of insects, tissue and other such items in a trash can rather than in the toilet.

- Install instant water heaters in bathrooms so you don’t have to let it run while the water heats up.

- Insulate your water pipes and water heater to get hot water faster and avoid wasting water while it heats up.

- Replace leaky drain plugs in sinks and bathtubs.